

Testimony before Children's Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

Thursday, February 27, 2014

Committee Chairs and Members, thank you for allowing me to speak to you today about Bill 229. My name is Victor Peña. I am a resident of Darien, CT and co-founder and Secretary of The Andy Smiles Forever Foundation. A foundation that was established in memory of my son Andy who passed away from a Sudden Cardiac Arrest, one month shy of his 15th birthday.

Two years and 11 months ago my son Andy, who was an avid swimmer and proud member of the high school track team, was training on a treadmill. He had wanted to post a personal best time for his mile run and he pushed himself hard like many of his peers and our children athletes do when they participate in competitive sports. He accomplished what he set out to do for himself, his teammates and his coach. But shortly after he fainted and never awoke again. He had suffered a Sudden Cardiac Arrest at the tender age of 14.

My wife and I have since learned that Sudden Cardiac Arrest is the number one cause of death of student athletes. While we may believe that Sudden Cardiac Arrest mostly afflicts adults, we are seeing more news about teens and young adults dying from this and we can no longer be complacent.

We do not want other families to take this road of enlightenment that my wife and I took to learn about Sudden Cardiac Arrest. There is a more effective and less painful way to educate ourselves and minimize deaths resulting from Sudden Cardiac Arrest.

Bill 229 is what we need but in a more simplified form. We are asking that parents and coaches sign an informed consent form that provides a brief explanation what Sudden Cardiac Arrest is and its warning signs – education is key. We also support that coaches receive annual training on Sudden Cardiac Arrest– this will literally take less than 10 minutes to do – and is the perfect complement to existing requirements that coaches maintain CPR and AED certifications. Performing CPR and using an AED within 3-5 minutes of a Sudden Cardiac Arrest will greatly increase the chances of survival with one study showing 4 out of 10 victims survive.

As parents who lost a child to Sudden Cardiac Arrest, it is very difficult for my wife and me to know that the outcome may have been very different if we would have known about the signs of Sudden Cardiac Arrest, and if someone had performed CPR and used an AED on Andy immediately after he fainted. Remember the likelihood of survival is increased tremendously if CPR is given and an AED is used within 3-5 minutes of an occurrence. Bill 229, if it becomes law, will educate and provide precious minutes to a victim that may save his or her life.

We do not want other families to suffer the same fate of this unspeakable, unthinkable outcome of losing a child. It is surprising to note that we have a word to describe a child who loses a parent, a word for a spouse who loses a partner, but no word to describe when a parent loses a child. I implore you to make a difference and pass Bill 229.

Thank you for your time.